

Wednesday Lent, Week 1



Walk along the promenade, by the sea in Bandra, the affluent and very Christian section of Bombay and you will see how quickly a society can advance materially. The rich young have all the latest gadgets and the right designer labels. The old have their minders or their friends to sit and gossip with. There is an air of display and confidence. People here like showing off to each other while they enjoy the view of the red ball of the sun visibly sinking into the sea. We can do and feel more than one thing at a time and one pleasure can enhance the other. Look at me. I feel good to be well off. And it's a beautiful sunset.

An arms length away there is a parallel universe seemingly invisible to this one. Some sea urchins – the human kind not echinoderms – scurry around on the beach below the busy promenade. They are dressed in rags and their spindly limbs show that the wealth of new India has not trickled down yet. It's difficult to say what they are doing. Playing, scavenging or up to something illicit. Anyway, they are not flourishing but busy surviving in their unparented, invisible youth.

You don't have to go to India to see this parallel universe which we, on the promenade of life, worrying about our luxuries, usually filter out so that it is invisible. We can't compute it in our own world so better delete it. Look in the shopping malls, subway stations and shop doorways at night in all the big cities of the world. "The poor you will always have with you", Jesus said.

If Lent means anything it is the time to remove our perceptual filters and blinkers. To see the whole picture and the full spectrum of life with the eyes of truth and compassion. If meditation is real it will do this and we will see everything, including God's presence in all human need and loneliness, in a new light.

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